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ON TAP

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Is There Really A Drought

Yes, there really is a drought! After a somewhat rainy January and February, precipitation came to a virtual stop in March through June, qualifying the four-month period as the driest on record. 2008 saw the sixth driest April-May-June in 114 years of record keeping. Rainfall for the year is about 75% of average. The Department of Water Resources says rain and snow runoff will be low enough to designate 2008 as critically dry on both the Sacramento and San Joaquin river systems.

California's Drought Fact Sheet Back-to-back dry years and low reservoir levels have put California squarely in a statewide drought. In water terms, reservoirs are large storage lakes that are critical for supplying water in the State. State water officials say key reservoirs such as Lake Oroville will dip to record low levels later this fall. Mandatory rationing is in place in certain urban areas, and growers in some of California's most productive agricultural regions are seeing dramatic cuts in water deliveries.

Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger declared an official drought June 4, 2008. The Governor also declared a local drought emergency in nine Central Valley counties due to water shortages.

Reservoir Storage Storage in key statewide reservoirs continued to drop in June. Lake Oroville, one of the state's largest reservoirs and the mainstay of the State Water Project, is at 49% of average for this time of year. The lake is expected to drop to record low levels by this fall. San Luis Reservoir, located south of the Delta, is at 40% of average.

Some agricultural districts are under mandatory rationing to avoid drawing down San Luis Reservoir at a rate that would put the earthen reservoir at risk of slumping.

Urban water agencies are asking customers to conserve as well.

Court Rulings and Wildfires

In December, a U.S. District Court judge ordered restrictions on water project operations in the Delta to help protect a threatened fish species known as the Delta smelt. The restrictions are reducing water deliveries by as much as 30% this year to 25 million Californians. Millions of acres of farmland are also impacted. Another decision by the same judge involving salmon may also affect water project operations in the near future. A recent action regarding long-fin smelt may impose even greater restrictions on water deliveries.

The state's dry conditions are also exacerbating a very potent fire season. In late June, a lightning storm sparked more than 800 wildfires across the state, burning tens of thousands of acres and filling the air with smoke for weeks.

With California officially in a drought, all water agencies are dealing with challenges ranging from low runoff to court-ordered reductions in water deliveries to soaring energy costs.

Below are some of the impacts facing water agencies throughout California and what these agencies are doing for conservation measures:

- 40% have declared a water supply or drought alert.
- 70% are calling for voluntary conservation and 13% have mandatory rationing in place.
- 25% have imposed restrictions on outdoor watering.
- 50% of agricultural agencies say they are rationing irrigation water and 22% say farmland is being fallowed.
- 16% say crops are being abandoned.
- 39% are drawing down their water reserves/reservoir storage to meet needs this year.
- 34% say they are planning to increase water rates due to water supply.
- 17% say they have drought rates or surcharges in place.

This information is just a portion of the entire growing drought problem. When water supplies to statewide reservoirs are reduced in repeated years, and the reservoirs water levels continue to drop to historic lows, the situation is serious.

You are encouraged to save water at every opportunity. Please visit **bewaterwise.com** for more information about water conservation.

Trabuco Canyon Water District is in the process of updating its Water Ordinance concerning the use of water in the District. As you might well be able to understand, much of the ordinance is being amended to deal with the possibility of extended water shortages in the State.

Information and a visual display of the proposed telecommunications improvements at TCWD's Trabuco Highlands Reservoirs will be available at the TCWD Administration Building after September 15th.

A reminder, if you pay your utility billings through your bank and designate the due date of your water bill as the date for payment, you might be risking a late fee. This is due to the

The Regular Board Meeting is held on the third Wednesday of each month at 7:00 p.m. at the District office located at 32003 Dove Canyon Drive, Trabuco Canyon. The public is encouraged to attend.

BOARD HIGHLIGHTS

- ◇ **August 20, 2008 – Approved membership in the California Special Districts Association.**
- ◇ **Received information relating to financial assumptions and water/sewer and reclaimed and recycled water rates.**
- ◇ **Received status updates relating to the Rose Canyon and Lang Wells Upgrades to Treatment Facilities Project and the Baker Regional Water Treatment Facility.**
- ◇ **Conducted a Closed Session.**

ON TAP is published and distributed by TCWD. We welcome your comments, suggestions and questions. Please call or write Sharon E. Smith, Editor

TCWD's *ON-TAP*

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